



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES HELD AT THE BOURGES/VIERSEN ROOM - TOWN HALL ON 13 JULY 2010

Present: Councillors D Over (Chairman), G Nawaz (Vice-Chairman), R Dobbs and D Harrington

Officers Present: Mike Heath, Commercial Services Director
Anne Senior, Economic Participation Programme Manager
Maxine Grimes, Partnership Officer
Jenny Harris, Lawyer
Louise Tyers, Scrutiny Manager

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sanders and Shaheed.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 June 2010

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2010 were approved as a correct record.

20mph Speed Limits outside Schools

The Scrutiny Manager advised that officers had now concluded the informal consultation with schools and had received favourable support for the proposals alongside some requests for slight modifications. The formal statutory consultation would now be issued with a view to implementing the measures later this year.

Affordable Housing

The Legal Officer advised that following the previous meeting an advice note on the development and allocation of affordable housing in the rural areas had been developed and had been placed in front of members tonight. The Chairman advised that the advice note had raised a number of issues and requested that an item on affordable housing be brought to a future meeting.

3. Declaration of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

4. Peterborough Women's Enterprise Centre

The report provided a background to the establishment of the Women's Enterprise Centre (WEC) and the aims and objectives of the WEC on work undertaken or was planned to be undertaken to engage with women in rural areas.

The Council was working together with the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) to enable people to achieve their potential in work or self employment as outlined in the Investing in Communities (IiC) Business Plan 2007-11. The aim of the programme was to ensure that the most deprived communities could achieve their full potential and therefore contribute to, and benefit from, sustainable economic growth in the Peterborough Area.

The objectives for the project were:

- To create a centre of excellence for the support and development of women starting and running their own business
- To provide economic opportunity for women in order to enhance their contribution to the regional economy
- To improve opportunity, social inclusion and wealth for women
- To raised awareness of and increased access to support

The expected outcomes from the project would be:

- a centre and outreach provision were services were accessible to women from all sectors of society regardless of any special requirements or ethnic background.
- high quality services to facilitate opportunities for women to succeed in their chosen field.
- women who want to start or grow a business, or progress within their chosen career are given the support and encouragement they need to succeed.

Research had shown that the most deprived areas as evidenced by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation were:

- Dogsthorpe
- East
- Paston
- Central
- Ravensthorpe

The project recognised that there were issues of deprivation in rural areas that had not been identified by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, and whilst the funding did not target specifically women in rural communities, the centre accommodated every woman who walked into the centre, irrespective of where they lived in Peterborough. The project staff were happy to work with the Scrutiny Commission to develop a programme of activities that would actively support enterprise for women in rural areas.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Deprivation was multi-faceted and did not just cover economic circumstances; it also covered isolation and poor transport access. In rural communities large numbers of people were only paid the minimum wage, lived in social housing and had limited employment opportunities.
- Was there anything dynamic that the WEC could do in the rural communities to support and encourage women, particularly stay at home mums? *The Centre would be able to deliver local one-to-one support but we would need to understand what the demand and expectations would be. There was website based support available called Enterprising Women.*
- It was important to ask the communities what they wanted. Could the Centre canvass the rural areas to see what support was needed, including leaving leaflets in shops and community facilities? *Your Peterborough often had articles about support and there was a walk-in at the Centre available.*
- The women in rural communities should not be denied access to support just because of where they lived. *Officers were happy to put an engagement strategy together and bring it back to a future meeting.*
- It was suggested that the Centre may want to try a number of engagement methods, possibly including talking to a parish council, leaving leaflets and posters at a village shop or post office, using the mobile library or speaking to a Women's Institute.

- What would happen to the programme when EEDA ended? *Funding was available until March 2011 and work was ongoing to develop bids to access other funding. The Council was committed to continuing to fund the project.*

ACTION AGREED

To receive a further report on the engagement with women in rural communities at the meeting of the Commission in November 2010.

5. Passenger Transport Framework Tender

The report gave details of the proposed decision in relation to the Passenger Transport Framework Contract.

School transport was provided in line with the Council's Children's Services Transport Policy and provided free or subsidised transport for a number of schools as per the requirements of the Education Act 1996 and Education and Inspections Act 2006. Transport was required for children in mainstream education and those with special educational and social care needs. Contracts were tendered on a rolling procurement programme to ensure best value.

The contract did not have any specific implications for the rural communities.

Observations and questions were raised around the following areas:

- Safety at picking up and dropping off points was an issue, especially due to increased traffic and speeds. It should be included within the contract that pick up and dropping off points should be in a safe position. For example, in Ashton pick ups took place on a corner and in Bainton the bus stop was used by other drivers to overtake when turning right.
- On Crowland Road in Newborough even though there was solid yellow lines people still parked on the road and the bus layby was not big enough. Children had to actually walk onto Crowland Road to get on the bus. On Werrington Bridge Road children were picked up on the roadside.
- In America on school buses a sign automatically came out to stop traffic and to let the children cross the road.
- It was important to make sure that vehicles which were used as school buses were clearly marked, including having a large sign in the back window.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended to the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University that as a requirement of the Passenger Transport Framework Contract:

- (i) all picking up and dropping off points must be located in safe locations to ensure the safety of the children;
- (ii) all buses which are being used as school buses must be clearly marked, at the cost of the contractor, with at least a large magnetic sign in the rear window which clearly identifies the vehicle as a school bus and that children are crossing.

6. Floating Support Contract: Cross Keys Homes Extension of Contract

The report gave details of a proposed decision in relation to the Floating Support Contract for Cross Keys Homes.

The Floating Support service offered a free and flexible housing-related advice and support service. The service aimed to help people across all tenures and across all areas of the City,

to live independently and maintain their tenancies through the use of a support plan tailored to their individual needs. It provided support for all ages from 16 years plus.

The contract did not have any specific implications for the rural communities.

ACTION AGREED

To note the proposed decision relating to the Floating Support Contract.

7. Forward Plan

The latest version of the Forward Plan, showing details of the key decisions that the Leader of the Council believed the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members would be making over the next four months, was received.

A decision on the future of Peterborough Community Services was scheduled to be taken by the Cabinet in September. It would be important to scrutinise that decision to examine the impact of adult social care on the rural communities.

ACTION AGREED

- (i) To note the latest version of the Forward Plan.
- (ii) To scrutinise the decision in relation to the Future of Peterborough Community Services.

8. Work Programme

We considered our work programme.

It was agreed to look at the following items at our next meeting:

- Rural Economic Development – invite a representative of Business Link or Chamber of Commerce
- Growth of Villages – how the character of villages can be kept during growth, what are the implications for planning

The Chairman advised that he had spoken to Graeme Law who informed him that three rural planning policies would be coming through in the near future and we would need to consider the impact of them on the rural communities as there were often very few comments submitted from rural areas during consultations. These would be programmed into our work programme when available so we could put forward what was needed in the villages.

An Intern would also be working on a thesis on what the villages would look like in 10 years time and this could also be added to our work programme when available.

ACTION AGREED

To confirm our work programme.

9. Date of the Next Meeting

Tuesday 7 September 2010 at 7pm.

CHAIRMAN
7.00 - 7.40 pm